

ESFUERZO, DESEO, PASIÓN

Youth2Adult — Y2A — is a series of articles celebrating sailing's role in youth development for Caribbean children.

CARLOS LEE



Fraito and his father worked on an improved design and built a new chalana together. Apparently, their ideas were good because with Fraito's determination, practice and the improved boat, he began winning local regattas. By his late teens he sought greater challenges and skippered chalanas in regattas all along Puerto Rico's southern coast. As many as 40 chalanas were on the starting lines during those years.

By 1990, Fraito was racing J/24s. In 1994, he won the Puerto Rico Heineken International Regatta and, in 1997, the International Rolex Regatta in St. Thomas, USVI. Since then, he has taken first place in the Rolex (now the St. Thomas International Regatta) 11 times!

In 2002 at the Centro-Americano Games in El Salvador, Fraito took silver. He seized the gold medal in Mayagüez in 2010 and took bronze in Veracruz in 2014.

According to 1984 Soling Puerto Rico Olympian, Ronnie Ramos, "I remember beating him in every single J/24 race for about three years in a row, maybe more. I used to give him some tips, mostly about confidence. We'd go over each race afterwards. He complained that no matter how much he tried, we always beat him.

"I remember very well, and I am sure that he also remembers, that I kept telling him not to give up; that every race he was getting better and it was getting more difficult to beat him.

"We beat him badly during the qualifiers for the '93 Central American and Caribbean Games. We really beat everybody's ass! I invited him aboard *Campechano*, my large catamaran used as mother ship during the Games in Fajardo. We discussed each race at its conclusion.

"Time passed and I told him, 'You have to believe that you can beat us. Once you beat us, we will never beat you again.' And that's exactly what happened!"

Racing became Fraito's marketing tool for the services that his business provided. Working for Quantum Sails at the Ponce Sailing Center, he sells sails as well as

Effort, desire and passion are qualities that Fraito Lugo has brought to a lifetime of sailing

providing sail repair, canvas- and cushion-making, and rigging and running-rigging services. Meeting prospective customers and networking within the marine industry are all facilitated through his racing and his growing reputation as a marine industry professional. Today, you may run into Fraito Lugo racing or servicing boats in Marina Puerto del Rey in Puerto Rico's southeast, at Club Náutico de San Juan in the north, in Marina Pescadería in the southwest, or any of the many other marinas and ports of Puerto Rico.

As this article goes to print, Fraito is dashing off to a regatta in France.

From "Youth to Adult", Fraito Lugo is an example of a Caribbean child who, through nurturing parents and community members, developing his skill sets and utilizing his own determination, came to make a fine marine livelihood on his home island.

Takeaways:

- Be willing to take guidance from trusted local community members.
- Persevere through disillusioning and disappointing times.
- Building reputation eventually leads to business and personal opportunities.

Ellen Birrell attributes her opportunity to cruise the Caribbean aboard S/V Boldly Go to life skills built in childhood. Believing swimming and sailing are essentials for island youth, she supports grass roots and competitive junior sailing and serves as chair of sailing development for Caribbean Sailing Association (<http://caribbean-sailing.com/sailing-development/the-future-of-caribbean-sailing>).

Success comes in many languages.

Now, more than ever, is the time for Caribbean people to appreciate their diversity and the opportunity that diversity brings to learn from others and grow shared success. Although the unique heritage of each Caribbean island and nation is something to treasure and preserve, through a shared desire and vision for all children to have the tools to succeed, the Caribbean can enjoy heightened prosperity. Learning about the marine environment, including the dynamics of sailing, is part of that.

No matter one's first language or island of origin, learning from neighbors in islands to the north, south, east and west is a wonderful opportunity.

Fraito Lugo is a citizen of the Caribbean who has such a lesson to share. The cover of a 2015 edition of Puerto Rico's *Nautica* magazine called him a man of "esfuerzo, deseo y pasión" (effort, desire and passion). Although growing up in a humble village in Puerto Rico, he gained the respect of the island's best and brightest as he developed from youth to adult.

For Fraito, who turns 45 this month, growing up in a village near Ponce and learning sailing basics in a municipal sailing program at ten years old started him on a path to gainful employment and an exciting career.

After Fraito spent a year in the junior sailing program, his father bought him a *chalana* (a local traditional boat of under 20 feet). They named the boat *El Baby*. It was soon destroyed by a hurricane's storm surge. Instead of mourning the loss,

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